

# Danesfort Dispatches

## A Quarterly Newsletter from the U.S. Consulate General Belfast

April 2011



Vol. 6, Issue 2

Dear American Community,

Happy Spring!! It is wonderful to see the daffodils and know that winter is finally over (hopefully.) I just returned from being in Washington for St. Patrick's Day week. Northern Ireland First Minister Peter Robinson and deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness met separately with President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton as well as other senior officials in both Congress and the Executive Branch. Other representatives of Northern Ireland's government, business, and civil society attended President and First Lady Obama's St. Patrick's Day reception at the White House.

U.S. Economic Envoy Declan Kelly and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce hosted a business event highlighting investment and trade opportunities in Northern Ireland – First Derivatives CEO Brian Conlon and HBO senior executive Jay Roewe spoke at the event highlighting why Northern Ireland is a great place to do business. At the Northern Ireland Bureau breakfast, the First and deputy First Ministers promoted the creative industries sector in Northern Ireland and a specially produced video was shown highlighting Northern Ireland-produced film, music, gaming, and other creative industries.

We look forward to another busy quarter as we move toward brighter evenings and the summer months. Don't forget that our U.S. Consulate Belfast Facebook page provides frequent updates about our many activities and services to the American community here. Please join as a fan.

Sincerely,

Kamala Lakhdhir,  
Consul General

## Register with the State Department

The current unrest in the Middle East, and in particular the evacuation of U.S. citizens from Egypt and Libya, as well as the natural disasters in Japan, highlight the importance of letting the State Department know when you travel overseas. By informing us about your trip or residence abroad, you help the applicable embassy or consulate locate you when you might need them most. Signing up is voluntary and costs nothing, but it should be a big part of your travel planning and security. To sign up, go to

<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>.

You will create an account by clicking on the "Create Account" link and following the instructions provided. This allows you to select a username and password so that you can access your travel data at any time. The account will also contain your personal

information so that it can be saved and used again whenever you travel abroad.

For more information on how the State Department can assist Americans overseas visit [http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies\\_1212.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html).

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## Safety Information for Student Travel Abroad



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As spring and summer breaks approach, many students are getting ready for a trip abroad. The majority of students traveling abroad will have safe and enjoyable adventures. However, even with the best-planned trips, things can go wrong.

Each year, more than 2,500 American citizens are arrested abroad – about half on narcotics charges, including possession of very small amounts of illegal substances. Being arrested is not the only thing that can go wrong on a foreign vacation. U.S. citizens have been badly injured or have been killed in automobile accidents, falls, and other mishaps. Many of these incidents are related to alcohol and/or drug use. Other have been sexually assaulted or robbed because they found themselves in unfamiliar locales, were incapable of protecting themselves because of drug or alcohol use, or were the victims of a “date rape” drug. The most common cause of death of U.S. citizens overseas, other than natural causes, is by motor vehicle accidents.

Students traveling abroad should be aware that standards of safety overseas might be different from those in the United States, or non-existent.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs website for American students traveling overseas, [studentsabroad.state.gov](http://studentsabroad.state.gov), provides useful safety and travel information for students prior to their travel. Students are strongly urged to review the information on the site and sign up online at <https://travelregistration.state.gov> to receive the latest travel information from the Department of State. Signing up makes it possible for the State Department to contact the student traveler, if necessary, in case of a family emergency in the United States or because of a crisis in the foreign country.

## U.S. Passport Cards: A Convenient Option

The U.S. passport card, a less-expensive and more portable alternative to the passport book, is proof of identity and U.S. citizenship. This travel document offers a convenient way for American citizens to re-enter the United States through land and sea ports of entry from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda. But beware, the card is not valid for air travel of any kind or for travel within Europe and IS NOT a globally recognized travel document! When outside the United States, the passport card can be used as valid citizenship identification. And because it's about the size of a credit card, it fits perfectly inside a wallet for easy carrying. Adults who currently have valid U.S. passports may apply for the passport card.

The U.S. Department of State began production of the U.S. Passport Card on July 14, 2008. As of March 2010, more than 2,700,000 Passport Cards have been issued to U.S. citizens.

[Visit the Department of State website to learn more!](#)

## Internal Revenue Service (IRS) - News and Information

As the season is upon us, getting questions and information from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is a top priority. The IRS office at Embassy London answers telephone inquiries on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon; Monday and Friday from 9:00 am - 4:00 pm. Their contact number is 0207894 0477. For information on tax issues [Visit the Embassy London IRS website](#).

Embassy Dublin's website offers Tax Accountants willing to prepare U.S. tax returns. For more information, visit their website at <http://dublin.usembassy.gov>.



Other News - On February 8, 2011, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) announced a special voluntary disclosure initiative designed to bring offshore money back into the U.S. tax system and help people with undisclosed income from hidden offshore accounts get current with their taxes. The new voluntary disclosures initiative will be available through August 31, 2011. A full news release about the 2011 OVDI can be found at <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=235695,00.html?portlet=7>.



## Spotlight : Visa Scams

### Diversity Visa Lottery Scams and Internet Scams

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#### Diversity Visa Scams -

The U.S. Consulate General Belfast and the U.S. Embassy London have received thousands of enquiries from people who are victims of a world-wide scam involving the Diversity Immigrant Visa (DV) Program, also known as the visa lottery. The scammers behind the fraudulent emails and letters pose as the U.S. government in an attempt to extract payment from Diversity Visa applicants. To avoid becoming a victim of their scam, please read the following advice:

The U.S. government **never** contacts visa lottery winners via email. Scammers are using increasingly sophisticated techniques that often use the Embassy's address or name an actual person at the U.S. Embassy in London as the point of contact. This would never happen if you really had won the visa lottery. The U.S. Government will **NOT** ask you to send money to them or to the Embassy in London or any other U.S. Embassy. Any message that asks you to send money, by mail or by services such as Western Union, **is a scam** even if a legitimate Embassy address is provided.

The only way to apply for the Diversity Visa Program is through the official U.S. Department of State website during the specified registration period which takes place annually in the Fall. If you have never registered for the program, you will **NOT** be contacted in regard to this program, and should find it strange if contacted regarding your winning.

If you registered for the Diversity Visa Program 2012, you will be required to check the outcome of your registration at the official U.S. government website <http://www.dvlottery.state.gov> beginning May 1, 2011. Prior to Diversity Visa 2012, all applicants were notified by the Department of State's Kentucky Consular Center (KCC) by letter, **NOT by email**. The letter provides exact instructions on how to proceed to the next step in the process. No other organization or private company is authorized by the Department of State to notify visa lottery applicants of their winning entry or the next steps in the process of applying for their visa.

For more information on how to avoid Internet scams, please visit: [http://london.usembassy.gov/cons\\_new/acs/scs/internet\\_scams.html](http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/scs/internet_scams.html)

#### Internet Scams -

We receive inquiries every day from people who have been defrauded for hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars by Internet contacts they thought were their friends or loved ones. Internet scams are attempts by con artists to convince you to send them money. These fraudulent schemes can include lotteries, on-line dating services, inheritance notices, work permits/job offers, bank overpayments, or even make it appear that you are helping a friend in trouble. Do **NOT** believe that you have won a lottery you never entered or inherited money from someone you've never met or heard of. Do **NOT** believe any offers (lottery, inheritance, etc.) that require a fee to be paid up front. Do **NOT** provide personal or financial information to businesses you don't know or haven't verified.

All of these scams have one thing in common - they contain requests for money. Sometimes you are asked to pay money to obtain something of value for yourself (e.g. a prize, a romantic relationship, more money); or you are asked to pay money to help a friend in trouble. In every case, however, the ultimate indicator of a scam is that you are always asked to give money.

Con artists can be very creative and very determined. Be skeptical. Do not send anyone money unless you are certain that it is a legitimate request - even if you think you know the person well based on your Internet correspondence. You are unlikely to be able to recover money lost in such scams.

If you believe you are the victim of an Internet scam, report the matter immediately to the Internet Crime Complaint Center, a partnership among the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), the National White Collar Crime Center (NW3C), and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BIA), at <http://www.ic3.gov>; and, if you are in the United Kingdom, to the Metropolitan Police, at <http://www.met.police.uk>.

To avoid falling victim to a scam, always be suspicious of anyone asking for money through the Internet, including via social networking sites, and always verify a supposed friend's circumstances by speaking to him or her directly. **ALWAYS** protect your online identity by securing your logins and passwords.

## Ulster American Women's Club

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### Announcement from the Ulster American Women's Club

The Ulster American Women's Club (UAWC) is a voluntary social group that meets monthly. It doesn't matter if you've been here 2 months or 20 years, living here short-term or permanently, we welcome you to connect with other American women and explore this wonderful land and culture in which we live.

Our tentative activities for the coming months include: April 5th (Tuesday AM) - North Down Museum in Bangor and lunch afterwards at the Castle Garden Restaurant; May 25th (Wednesday AM) - Ulster Folk & Transport Museum in Cultra/Hollywood and lunch afterwards at The Culloden; June 8th (Wednesday PM) - Ladies Night Out at Chiquito Mexican Restaurant in the Victoria Square Shopping Centre in Belfast; and June 22nd (Wednesday AM) - Mount Stewart House & Gardens on the outskirts of Newtownards.

If you are interested in receiving monthly emails with more detailed and up-to-date information on these and future activities, please contact Angie at [apramann@gmail.com](mailto:apramann@gmail.com)

## Irish American Football League (IAFL)

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### Announcement by the IAFL:

American Football has been played in Ireland since the early eighties between teams of enthusiastic amateurs and has survived many highs and lows over the years. It is currently riding a high of interest and participation which looks set to continue for the foreseeable future. The interest has been generated by regular television coverage of college and NFL games, while the participation has been developed and sustained by the Irish American Football Association, supported by the Irish Sports Council. The three teams located in Northern Ireland are the Belfast Trojans, Carrickfergus Knights and the Craigavon Cowboys.

It looks like 2012 will be a very eventful year for American Football in Ireland with the arrival of Notre Dame and Navy at the Aviva Stadium, Dublin and the Global Ireland Football Tournament (GIFT) in a number of venues in the Dublin area. Global Football's President is Patrick Steenberge, who quarterbacked Notre Dame for two seasons and has organized many games and tournaments in Ireland and around the world. GIFT has so far confirmed two D3 college teams (John Carroll University and St. Norberts) and two top high school teams (Notre Dame, CA and Chandler, AZ)

The IAFL season will culminate with the championship game, the Shamrock Bowl, in late July in Tallaght Stadium, Dublin. This is the second year that the Shamrock Bowl will be held there. Last year, the Dublin Rebels defeated the University of Limerick Vikings in front of 1500 spectators. For more details visit <http://www.americanfootball.ie>.



## Culture Corner

The U.S. Consulate General occasionally provides partial grants for cultural events which have an American element. Some of the events are free, for others there is a charge. This quarter, we encourage you to check out:

**Belfast Film Festival** - March 31– April 14, 2011— This year's event should be one of their finest. With a wide variety of films, performances and speakers, it has something for everyone. See their official website at <http://www.belfastfilmfestival.org/>

**The Young Singers of West Georgia** - April 7, 2011 - As part of the Sister City Partnership with La Grange, Georgia, the Craigavon Sister City International Committee presents an event at the Craigavon Civic & Conference Centre. Tickets available from various locations. Contact 02838 312427 for more information.

**"The Long Civil Rights Movement" lecture by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill** - May 11, 2011 at 4:00 pm, Queens University Belfast, Lanyon Building G-09 - This year, Queen's launches an exciting new American History Colloquium, bringing to Belfast some of the most distinguished scholars working in U.S. history to present papers and host seminars on their ongoing research. For more details and information contact Professor Catherine Clinton at [catherineclinton@mac.com](mailto:catherineclinton@mac.com).

**The Salvation Army New York Staff Band** - The esteemed New York Staff Band will be making a week-long visit to Ireland at the end of May. Regarded as one of the most technical and professional Salvation Army bands in the world, audiences were delighted when they last played in Belfast in 1999. The Band will be giving three concerts during their tour: **Belfast, Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> May** at Carnmoney Presbyterian Church, (tickets £10); **Dublin, Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> May** at The Round Room, (tickets €15) ; **Londonderry, Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June** at The Guildhall, (tickets priced £8). Seating is limited, so book early. Register your interest by e-mailing [ireland@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:ireland@salvationarmy.org.uk), or contacting Iris Corry at 028 9067 5009 for Belfast tickets, Lieutenant Dominic Eaton at 028 7126 4895 for Londonderry tickets or Major Marjory Parrot at (+353) 01 476 333 for Dublin tickets. Further information is available at [www2.salvationarmy.org.uk/ireland/nysb](http://www2.salvationarmy.org.uk/ireland/nysb).

**Disclaimer:** This listing of events, performances and other activities is for information purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Consulate Belfast. All opinions expressed by the artists, writers, and performers participating or contributing to the events listed are those solely of the participants and contributors and not the U.S. Government or its designated representatives. Listing information is believed to be correct at the time it is listed but the U.S. Consulate General accepts no liability for subsequent changes to these details and no reliance should be placed upon them.

**American Citizen Services:** In the event of a genuine emergency involving a U.S. Citizen in Northern Ireland, our after-hours phone number is **07545 507738**.

## Consular Closure Dates

The U.S. Consulate General Belfast will be closed on the following dates:

Friday, April 22, 2011 - Good Friday  
Monday, April 25, 2011 - Easter Monday  
Tuesday, April 26, 2011 - Easter Tuesday  
Friday, April 29, 2011 - Royal Wedding  
Monday, May 2, 2011 - May Day Holiday  
Monday, May 30, 2011 - Memorial Day/Spring Bank Holiday

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**KIDS CORNER**  
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Add a little color to this  
Spring Time scene!

